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<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2014-01-30/california-democrat-waxman-retiring-after-40-years-in-u-dot-s-dot-house>

# **Democrat Waxman Retiring After 40 Years in U.S. House**

By Greg Giroux January 30, 2014

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U.S. Representative Henry Waxman, a California Democrat who helped craft and pass President Barack Obama's 2010 health-care law, has decided not to seek a 21st term this year, he said in a statement today.

"I first ran for office because I believe government can be a force for good in people's lives," Waxman said. "I have held this view throughout my career in Congress. And I will leave the House of Representatives with my conviction intact."

As chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee in 2009 and 2010, Waxman worked with then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, also a California Democrat, to steer Obama's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act through the chamber.

"In all my years in politics, I felt the moral claim that this country has failed in not providing every American access to health care," Waxman said in March 2010, the month Obama signed the legislation into law.

"Henry will leave behind a legacy as an extraordinary public servant and one of the most accomplished legislators of his or any era," Obama said in a statement today.

Waxman, 74, was elected in 1974 as part of a wave of Democrats who won their seats three months after Republican Richard Nixon resigned the presidency amid the Watergate scandal. The other remaining member of that group serving in the House continuously since then, Representative George Miller, also of California, announced his retirement earlier this month.

Waxman took the helm of the Energy and Commerce panel by unseating, in a vote among House Democrats, Representative John Dingell, a Michigan Democrat and an ally of auto companies.

## **Emissions Measure**

An advocate of environmental regulation, Waxman as chairman pushed for a cap-and-trade system to curb greenhouse-gas emissions. The House narrowly passed the legislation in June 2009 and sent it to the Senate, where it stalled.

Under his leadership the committee also investigated the circumstances surrounding the April 2010 explosion on a BP Plc-operated well in the Gulf of Mexico that killed 11 workers and created the worst oil spill in U.S.

history.

Waxman lost the Energy and Commerce chairmanship after Republicans won the House majority in the 2010 elections. Since then, he has served as the committee's top Democratic member.

As chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee in 2007 and 2008, Waxman led investigations into steroid use in professional baseball and held hearings after the collapse of mortgage giants Fannie Mae ([FNMA:US](#)) and Freddie Mac and the investment bank Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc.

## Tobacco Hearings

In 1994, as chairman of Energy and Commerce's health subcommittee, Waxman held hearings that put the tobacco industry under the spotlight. At one session that gained wide coverage, tobacco company executives testified under oath that nicotine wasn't addictive.

The hearings were credited with helping lay the groundwork for lawsuits that led in 1998 to a settlement in which major tobacco companies agreed to make payments to U.S. states to resolve claims that cigarettes caused public-health dangers.

"My investigations into the tobacco industry called the CEOs to account and exposed the industry's duplicity," Waxman said today in his statement. "After more than a decade of effort, President Obama signed into law my legislation to give FDA jurisdiction over tobacco products," he also said, referring to the federal Food and Drug Administration.

The congressman also listed "health, environmental protection, women's and gay rights, and strengthening the ties between the United States and our most important ally, the state of Israel," as issues that he especially cared about.

## 'Boiled Owl'

Waxman is "tougher than a boiled owl," then-Senator Alan Simpson, a Wyoming Republican, said in 1990 after the two helped negotiate an agreement to revise clean-air laws.

In his statement, Waxman said, "There are elements of Congress today that I do not like. I abhor the extremism of the Tea Party Republicans. I am embarrassed that the greatest legislative body in the world too often operates in a partisan intellectual vacuum, denying science, refusing to listen to experts, and ignoring facts."

Still, he said he wasn't "leaving out of frustration with Congress." Instead, he said, "After 40 years in Congress, it's time for someone else to have the chance to make his or her mark, ideally someone who is young enough to make the long-term commitment that's required for real legislative success."

## Close Ally

Waxman was born in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights. On both sides of his family, his grandparents had emigrated from what is now Moldova to avoid anti-Jewish pogroms in the early 1900s.

Prior to taking his House seat in January 1975, Waxman served six years in the California Assembly. He forged a political alliance there with Democrat Howard Berman, a friend from their days as students at UCLA who served in the House with Waxman from 1983 to 2013.

He and Berman headed a political network named after them that for many years determined who held office in parts of Los Angeles and was fueled by wealthy donors in the city's heavily Democratic Westside.

Democrats are favored to keep control of Waxman's 33rd District, which includes parts of the Westside and all of Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, Malibu and Redondo Beach. Obama won 61 percent of the district vote in the 2012 election.

Waxman took a career-low 54 percent of the vote that year against a wealthy political independent who spent about \$8 million in a district reshaped by the congressional line-drawing process.

## House Turnover

He is the 30th House member who has announced plans to retire at the end of the year or seek a different political office. Most of those congressional districts lean heavily to one party.

Miller, 68, the other "Watergate Baby" giving up his seat in the 2014 election, represents a San Francisco-area district. The other Democrat in the House first elected in 1974, Representative Richard Nolan of Minnesota, served three terms and then left the chamber. He then returned after winning a seat in 2012.

Waxman's former chief of staff, Phil Schiliro, recently returned to Washington to help Democrats promote the health law measure -- hurt by a flawed rollout late last year -- to voters before November's elections. Schiliro, who had moved with his family to New Mexico, previously served as the Obama administration's congressional liaison.

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